



Choosing the Right Shoe for Your Sport

The most important aspect of sport shoe selection is finding the proper fit. The second important factor in shoe selection is making a decision based on design characteristics.

An illustrative example is when young athletes run track in basketball shoes. Their rationale is that running is part of basketball, so why not save money by using the same shoes for track. What is not appreciated by these athletes is that track shoes differ from basketball shoes in such features as cushioning, support, and weight. Track shoes, then, are designed to protect athletes from stresses unique to track; while the converse is true about basketball shoes. Each sport places different demands on the musculoskeletal system, and the manufacturers of sports shoes have consulted with experts in the field of biomechanics to craft shoes with this in mind.

Physicians and staff at Summa Center for Sports Health recommend using the following checklist when selecting sport-specific shoes:

Running:

- Good shock absorption
- Rigid heel counter
- Good flexibility at the mid foot
- Good traction
- Good foot protection

Trail runners should buy trail running shoes, which offer better traction features and wider toe boxes. Runners who do a lot of racing may choose to race in a lightweight racing shoe but should probably wear shoes with more support and stability for the majority of their training runs.

Field sports:

- Sport-specific cleat or tread
- Match cleat length to conditions on the playing surface
- Longer the cleat, higher incidence of injury
- Artificial playing surfaces, use stiffer-soled shoe

Indoor court:

- Cup-soled shoes provide stable base for foot allowing forward/side movement
- Hardwood floors, use rubber or rubber-blend sole
- Synthetic floors, use polyurethane or rubber-blend sole
- Leather high tops provide added ankle support*

*Since the most common basketball injury is a sprained ankle, one of the main goals of basketball shoes is ankle support. While controversy exists over whether high-top basketball shoes actually prevent injury, research exists suggesting that this design provides a measure of psychological support and increases an athlete's awareness of foot and ankle position during sports.



Summa Center for Sports Health



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Additional advice regarding high-top basketball shoes:

Some high-top basketball shoes sold today are designed more for fashion than function. Basketball shoes intended to withstand the demands of competitive basketball play are classified as "performance models." The main features of these performance models are:

- Leather upper for longer-lasting support and durability
- Notches in the eyestay system (the points where laces attach to the shoe) to provide more flexibility
- Padding in the ankle collar to provide support against side-to-side movements and pivoting.

Some basketball shoes have special features that provide even more stability (and theoretically greater protection from injury):

- Inner boot, which is a strap system that extends up the ankle. (It is laced separately from the upper and provides a more snug fit than the ankle collar alone and limits excess motion and may increase the proprioceptive sense.)
- External support straps to increase ankle support. (These are typically made of a firmer material than the upper of the shoe.)

Outdoor sports:

- Tennis on grass, use rubber-blend base preferably
- Abrasive surfaces, use polyurethane outer sole and mid sole

Allow time for shoes to be broken in prior to practices and games. Have your child wear the shoes in the house (unless cleated) to aid in breaking in and to prevent blisters once the shoes are used in sports. Runners should not go on a long run nor race the first time they use new running shoes. Finally, encourage athletes not to wear game/practice shoes outside of sport, in order to lengthen the life of the shoes and to maintain proper function.



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